

ENGLISH only

**Statement at the Meeting of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Troika and OSCE Asian Partners for Cooperation**

**7 December 2011**

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Thank you Foreign Minister Audronius Ažubalis for Lithuania's hosting of the OSCE Ministerial Council and for chairing this meeting of the OSCE Troika and Asian Partner countries.

I have seen first hand that you have done a terrific job in hosting the Ministerial Council.

Thank you also to Kazakhstan. I attended the OSCE Summit in Astana last year, which was hosted very well by Kazakhstan.

I look forward to Ireland's chairing of the OSCE in the period ahead.

Australia appreciates the strong cooperation we have had with OSCE Secretary-General Ambassador Lamberto Zannier, who is always professional and a good person to engage with.

The Australian Government is interested in undertaking further projects between the OSCE and Australia.

I will have further to say about this cooperation during my remarks to the Ministerial Council later today.

For the OSCE Asian Partners for Cooperation, I think we collectively appreciate this opportunity to engage with the OSCE Troika, the Secretary-General and the Parliamentary Assembly.

For OSCE Asian Partners - Japan, the Republic of Korea, Mongolia, Thailand, Afghanistan and Australia – this is a useful gathering to further our participation in the deliberations of the OSCE based on the common principles articulated in Helsinki in 1975.

As I said yesterday at the working lunch, the principles which underpin the Helsinki Accord are not universally held.

These are principles of democracy and human rights.

These are principles of the peaceful resolution of conflict.

And these are principles concerning the evolution of common concepts of security.

It is a good thing that in wider Europe since 1975 there has been agreement on these fundamentals, even though there have been many debates about the effectiveness of

the implementation of these principles in various states and in various conflicts which have occurred in that period of time.

Firstly, in our part of the world in Asia, from Australia's perspective, let me provide a short report card against those principles, which is worth reflecting on, and explains why we believe this engagement with the OSCE is important.

If we look at democracy and human rights, let's be very frank.

In North Korea, we have a totalitarian state.

In China, we have a non-democracy.

We have human rights challenges across Indochina – in Vietnam and Cambodia and to some extent in Laos.

We have a very thinly emerging civilian government in Burma.

We have a military coup in Fiji.

And there remains challenges in Sri Lanka.

In other words, there are sustained challenges of a large scale on the democratic scorecard of Asia and the Pacific.

It is worth bearing these things in mind.

Secondly, if you go to the question of the peaceful resolution of conflict and the evolution of concepts of common security, we in Asia face large scale challenges.

As I said in our working lunch yesterday, we in our part of the world have large scale and globally significant unresolved territorial disputes.

On the Korean Peninsula, North Korea in the last 12 months launched two unprovoked attacks on South Korea.

These are provocative attacks and we are concerned about what North Korea may do in the year ahead.

I was at the demilitarized zone in South Korea last week and received briefings about the nature of North Korea's provocations.

North Korea's continued development of a nuclear program, a nuclear weapons program and its missile development program and its possession of both uranium and plutonium-based weapons is of fundamental concern to the future common security and stability of wider Asia, not just our friends on the Korean Peninsula.

The unresolved territorial disputes between China and Japan and the East China Sea, the question of Taiwan, the South China Sea, and in South Asia the continued disagreements over places like Kashmir.

This is a very quick reflection to our friends in Europe that in our wider continent we have significant unresolved territorial conflicts, which therefore require all the disciplines of peaceful management and dispute resolution, which we have seen in Europe in recent times.

Finally on the question of common security, as I said in my remarks yesterday, the tragedy for Asia is that up until now, there is not an equivalent of the OSCE process.

This is part of the reason for Australia's engagement with this institution.

This provides us with an opportunity for reflection in our part of the world about how we can evolve such an institution.

Australia has been seeking to promote the concept of an Asia-Pacific community over the last 4 years.

This has achieved real progress, with the meeting last month in Indonesia of an expanded East Asia Summit, which for the first time has all of the principal players from the wider region around the table.

The East Asia Summit has an open agenda on questions of security, politics, economic and other matters.

This is the first time in the history of Asia this has happened.

But we have a long, long way to go.

And why is this relevant to Europe?

I think it is relevant in two respects.

The values that we hold closely in Europe that are reflected in the Helsinki Accords are in Australia's view, universal values.

Therefore we need institutions that seek to encourage and enhance these values across wider Asia.

The Bali Democracy Forum hosted by Indonesia for the last five years by President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, which will be on 8-9 December in Bali, is a strong effort by the Indonesian Government.

Indonesia is a new democracy, which has emerged over the last 10 years after a 40 year suspension.

With the Bali Democracy Forum, Indonesia has developed an excellent initiative in having home grown norms as well as cultures for spreading the tent of democracy and human rights.

This is from an emerging democracy itself.

Australia strongly supports the efforts of President Yudhoyono in this regard.

Beyond the universality of these values reflected in the Helsinki Accords, there is a wider question of political security which Europeans need to reflect on.

This is that the future security and democracy of Asia will directly affect the future of Europe.

The centre of geo-political, geo-strategic and geo-economic power has moved – not is moving – to the Asia-Pacific region against all the global measures.

It is not just China, it is India and the other emerging economies of wider Asia.

Therefore, how Asia conducts its own affairs for the next half century will directly impact on the global economy and it will directly impact on global security.

If any of the matters that I referred to earlier go wrong, for example on the Korean Peninsula or elsewhere, then the implications would be profound and global.

The point that I make overall is that this institution, the OSCE, despite all of its critics within Europe, is a process of dialogue, a process of common problem solving based on universal values which we in our part of the world are seeking through cooperation with the governments represented around this table to evolve over time as well.

From the perspective of the Australian Government, we see ourselves as a middle power.

We are the twelfth largest economy in the world, with global and regional interests.

We are active in all global institutions.

We are active and leading in most of our regional institutions as well.

But there is much work to be done.

We seek to do this work through what we describe as good international citizenship, and through creative middle power diplomacy.

To conclude on the question of our other partner countries, Australia encourages the maximum engagement by the OSCE in the unfolding evolution of Afghanistan.

We regard this as important.

Australia has been in Afghanistan from day one.

Our cumulative investment in that country both in terms of security and development is in excess of US\$11 billion.

We will remain involved in Afghanistan for the long term.

So the involvement of the OSCE in the nation building of Afghanistan we fully support.

On Mongolia, Australia fully supports Mongolia's application to become a full member of the OSCE.

If we accept the principle that the OSCE is an institution that extends from Vancouver to Vladivostok, my reading of the map is that Mongolia is within that geographic area, being west of Vladivostok.

Some of our friends here at the Ministerial Council in Vilnius need to be reminded of that fact of geography, without referring to any countries in particular.

There are three million people in Mongolia.

Mongolia is an emerging democracy, which is proud of its institutions.

Mongolia plays its part in global peacekeeping.

Mongolia is doing its best given the difficult period of its transition over the last 20 years.

It is a land-locked country, with a country of 1.3 billion people to its south and a country of 120 million people to its north, which represent different political traditions.

We have a responsibility to support our friends in Mongolia.

I strongly encourage all states that are members of the OSCE to support Mongolia's application to become a full member of the OSCE.

To conclude, Australia values its partnership with the OSCE.

We thank the government of Greece for its forwarding of Australia's initial application to become a partner country.

In a strange way, you may find this opening of partner relations with Asia to be one of those things which grows to become quite substantial over a period of time as the global focus further moves to Asia over the next half century again.

So I commend this Organisation for its efforts.

We support concrete cooperation activities between the Australian Government and the OSCE.

You will see a range of these activites outlined in my statement to the Ministerial Council later today.

Thank you.